

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

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TAGS: ETRD, EPAP, AU

SUBJ: AUSTRIAN FOOD LABELING ORDINANCE

REF: VIENNA 2308

DEPT PASS COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE

1. SUMMARY. EMBASSY HAS HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND LOCAL INDUSTRY REPS CONCERNING FOOD LABELING ORDINANCE AND US OBJECTIONS TO IT. THEY BELIEVE THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY THAT PRESENT ORDINANCE CAN BE AMENDED. THEY STATED, HOWEVER, THAT AUSTRIAN INDUSTRY BELIEVES IT CAN LIVE WITH ORDINANCE BY OPTING FOR DATE OF EXPIRATION RATHER THAN DATE OF PACKING AND BELIEVES THAT US COULD ALSO DO SO, USING PROCEDURES SIMILAR TO THOSE DEVELOPED BY AUSTRIANS. AUSTRIANS BELIEVE BEST HOPE FOR MEETING OBJECTIVES OF BOTH US AND AUSTRIAN FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES IS ON INTERNATIONAL LEVEL AND WOULD WELCOME COORDINATION OF POSITIONS WITH US. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF HAD DISCUSSION APRIL 2 CONCERNING SUBJECT ORDINANCE WITH DR. WERNER MELIS OF THE AUSTRIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND DR. KLAUS SMOLKA OF THE AUSTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES. BOTH WERE FULLY INFORMED ON US POSITION AND REPLY FROM FEDERAL UNCLASSIFIED

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TRADE MINISTRY AS REPORTED REFTEL. SMOLKA CONFIRMED

THAT AUSTRIAN INDUSTRY HAD OPPOSED ORDINANCE FOR SAME REASONS AS US. HE WAS CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO CHANGE ORDINANCE WOULD BE FRUITLESS.

3. AUSTRIAN INDUSTRY, SMOLKA CLAIMED, HAS LEARNED TO LOVE WITH ORDINANCE BY ELECTING NOT DATE OF PACKING BUT DATE OF EXPIRATION. WHILE HE AGREED IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO FIX A DATE BEYOND WHICH PRODUCT SHOULD NOT BE SOLD, HE INDICATED AUSTRIAN CANNERS HAVE DEVELOPED AGREED EXPIRATION PERIODS FOR THEIR PRODUCTS, AS WELL AS QUALIFYING LANGUAGE RELATING TO CONDITIONS OF STORAGE, ETC., TO APPEAR ON LABELS. SMOLKA SUGGESTED THAT US CANNERS COULD USE SIMILAR PRACTICES. ADVANTAGE OF EXPIRATION DATE IS THAT IT REMOVES ELEMENT OF DISCRIMINATION INHERENT IN PACKING DATE RELATED TO DIFFERENT GROWING SEASONS.

4. BOTH MELIS AND SMOLKA CONTENDED US POSITION IN ERROR IN STATING THAT SPECIAL LABELS WOULD HAVE TO BE PREPARED FOR AUSTRIAN MARKETS ONLY. THEY MAINTAIN PRODUCTS LABELED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ORDINANCE CAN ALSO BE SOLD IN WEST GERMANY UNDER PRESENT WEST GERMAN REGULATIONS.

5. SMOLKA AND MELIS SAW BEST CHANCE FOR MEETING INTERESTS OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY IN BOTH COUNTRIES IN INTERNATIONAL REALM. THEY INDICATED THAT REGULATIONS NOW UNDER STUDY IN OTHER COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY EC, WOULD IN FACT BE MORE RESTRICTIVE THAN AUSTRIAN REGULATIONS, IN THAT THEY WOULD REQUIRE DATE OF PACKING WITH NO OPTION AS TO USE OF OTHER DATING METHOD.

6. SMOLKA WILL REPRESENT AUSTRIA AT MEETING IN OTTAWA, MAY 26-30, OF THE JOINT FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAM OF WHO CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMITTEE. HE WILL URGE ON BEHALF OF GOA THAT INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS BE ESTABLISHED FOR FOOD LABELING WHICH WILL BE AS FLEXIBLE AS POSSIBLE. AUSTRIANS WILL OPPOSE THRUST OF MORE RESTRICTIVE EC-TYPE PROPOSALS. SMOLKA INDICATED THAT AUSTRIANS WOULD WELCOME US SUPPORT IN OTTAWA MEETING OR AT LEAST DISCUSSIONS WITH US DELEGATION CONCERNING AUSTRIAN POSITION. HE UNDER-

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STOOD THAT A MR. BEACHAM WOULD REPRESENT US AT THAT MEETING.

7. AUSTRIAN INDUSTRY, SMOLKA INDICATED, HAD ORIGINALLY URGED GOA NOT TO PASS FOOD ORDINANCE UNTIL AFTER AGREEMENT ON LABELING REQUIREMENTS HAD BEEN STANDARDIZED AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. AUSTRIAN INDUSTRY NOW FEARS THAT MORE RESTRICTIVE LABELING STANDARDS ALONG LINES OF

EC PROPOSALS MIGHT THEN FORCE OTHER COUNTRIES,
INCLUDING AUSTRIA, TO ADOPT MORE RIGID REGULATIONS
THAN THOSE NOW IN EFFECT.

8. EMBASSY SUGGESTS US DELEGATION TO OTTAWA MEETING
MAKE EARLY CONTACT WITH SMOLKA FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS
RE AUSTRIAN POSITION. MATERIAL PROVIDED BY SMOLKA
BEING FORWARDED BY POUCH TO EB/OT/STA FOR DISTRIBUTION
TO COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE.BUCHANAN

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